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NEWS BRIEFS

N'ganj Jubo Dal leader arrested

NARAYANGANJ, Sept 20: A Jubo Dal leader was arrested today on charge of various cases including murder. Badiuzzaman Bodu, a district leader of BNP's youth front Jubo Dal, was arrested from his residence at 12:45 this afternoon. His family members, however, claimed that Bodu was arrested while he was going to a nearby mosque to offer Jumma prayers, reports UNB.

CU exams postponed till Oct 1

CHITTAGONG, Sept 20: The authorities of the Chittagong University has decided to postpone all examinations of different academic years till October 1 due to unavoidable reasons. According to university sources, the fresh date of the examinations will be announced later, reports BSS.

Quakes hit Southern Philippines

HONG KONG, Sept 20: Two strong earthquakes shook the southern Philippines today, the Royal Hong Kong Observatory reported. It said one quake measuring 6.4 on the Richter scale shook an area 270 km (169 miles) east-southeast of Cebu island at 12:15 pm (0415 GMT). The observatory earlier reported the first quake in the same area with a strength of 6.2 at 8:07 am (0007 GMT), reports Reuters.

Keshab Chandra College opens today

From Our Correspondent
JHENIDAH, Sept 20: Jhenidah Government Keshab Chandra College reopens tomorrow after five days of closure. The college was closed following a series of clashes between the activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League and Biplobi Chhatra Moftee. Earlier, a peace meeting was held in the Deputy Commissioner's office.

Fugitive held

By Staff Correspondent
Police arrested KG Karim, a fugitive, from Zhigatola area under Dhanmondi thana in the city Thursday. Karim was wanted in several cases, police sources said adding that he sheltered terrorists in Dhanmondi area. Police said that there was allegations of collecting tolls against Karim.

Water & soil contamination may turn serious 25 lakh REB-imported poles contained over 3cr lb arsenic

Over three crore pounds of toxic arsenic compound entered into Bangladesh through the wooden electric poles imported by the Rural Electrification Board (REB) during the last two decades, official sources said here yesterday, reports BSS.

They said during the period over 25 lakh poles coated with arsenic compounds were imported and installed across the country for rural electrification.

The environment experts said that the soil and underground water at places where such poles have been installed might get severely contaminated in the long run.

According to the tender specification of the REB the poles were treated with chromated copper arsenate (CCA).

ammoniacal copper arsenic (ACA), oxide formulation only or ammoniacal copper zinc arsenic (ACZA).

REB sources said the arsenic compounds were used as preservatives to protect the poles from high temperature.

The specification said 12 pounds CCA were needed on an average to treat a ten feet wooden pole.

The sources said on an average the REB used 125 lakh poles annually.

An expert at the Atomic Energy Commission who preferred anonymity said the arsenic compounds on the poles could cause serious environmental hazards by contaminating the underground water and soil in the surrounding areas.

He said the arsenic contamination might reach a serious level in the near future.

The expert said the arsenic contamination in West Bengal of India was also widespread and source of this contamination was mineral resources. Because of this the arsenic contamination in West Bengal is caused in the soil under 200 to 300 feet.

But in the case of Bangladesh the arsenic contamination is found at 50 to 100 feet ground level which proved that the source of contamination is on the surface of the ground unlike West Bengal where arsenic contamination is concentrated in 14 districts. In Bangladesh the contamination is spread in several pockets.

He suggested that soil around

the installed poles should be tested to find out the level of arsenic contamination.

An official at the health directorate told BSS that arsenic contamination had been traced in the western border of the country. Besides there is an increase of arsenic contamination in the areas of Chapinawabganj, Narayanganj, Rajshahi, Kushtia, Melherpur, Chuadanga, Jhenidah, Jessore, Pabna, Bagerhat and Satkhira, he said.

The official said over 12 lakh people could fall victim to the arsenic contamination.

He underlined the need for extensive survey and experience to find out causes of the arsenic contamination before it got out of hand.

RAJUK chairman says 90pc deviate from the construction plan

Star Report

More than 90 per cent of the owners deviate from the RAJUK-approved plans during construction of buildings. Huseyn Khadem, Chairman of Rajshahi Unnayan Katipakha (RAJUK) said yesterday.

Within a month, RAJUK will crack down on unauthorised structures as well as buildings built deviating from the approved plans and start taking drastic action, the RAJUK chairman said.

The owners have got to be aware of the fact that by deviating from the building plans and using cheap and substandard building materials they are putting everyone at risk and making the buildings not sustainable," said the Chairman.

While talking to The Daily Star about the collapse of an under-construction seven-storied building in Kalabagan area of the city on Monday.

When asked about allegations that a section of the RAJUK supervisors and inspectors choose to 'overlook' anomalies in construction sites after being bribed, the RAJUK chairman said "the problem exists." In case of Monday's incident, we have suspended the Building Inspector and the process to suspend the Authorised Officer, Assistant Authorised Officer and the Chief Inspector was underway."

There are forty RAJUK supervisors whose duty is to oversee implementation of the approved designs during construction of buildings.

When asked whether RAJUK would make public the list of faulty and unauthorised structures prepared by a task force two years ago, the RAJUK Chairman replied, "there must be a revolutionary change in See Page 12 Col 2

Govt pledge-bound for unity among people of all beliefs: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said there will not be any disturbances or fighting and conflict among people if everybody properly follows the path showed by great and noble men in different ages, reports UNB.

She said all great men like Lord Buddha, Sri Krishna, Jesus Christ and Prophet Mohammad (SM) gave guidelines for religious practices and dedicated their life for peace and welfare of the people.

The Prime Minister was speaking at a function organised by the Bangladesh Bouddha Krishiti Prachar Sangha in connection with the inaugural of International Prayer Hall and Nikkio Niyao Clinic at the Dharmarajik Mahabihar at Kamalapur in the city in the afternoon.

Hasina said that she was pleading for a peaceful understanding from all irrespective of caste, creed and political beliefs.

See Page 12 Col 1

100 days in power ALCWC meets soon to review performance

By Reaz Ahmad

The Central Working Committee (ALCWC) of ruling Awami League will meet here this week to take stock of the latest political developments in the country, party insiders said yesterday.

The meeting is being considered important as it is going to be held against the backdrop of the upcoming national council session of the party, scheduled for December next. The party's crossing 100 days in power and the main opposition party's renewed threat of launching a greater movement programme. The ALCWC meeting may review the performance of the new government, party insiders said.

The last meeting of the ALCWC was held on July 26 which was the first after Awami League came to power after 21 years. At that meeting, the national council session of the party was deferred by three months for holding parliamentary by-polls in some constituencies and flood in the country.

Awami League president and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to chair the upcoming See Page 12 Col 1

Murtaza Bhutto hurt in gunfight with police

By Staff Correspondent

Murtaza Bhutto, brother of Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, was critically injured in a clash between his supporters and police in Karachi yesterday, BBC World Service reported from Islamabad.

BBC quoted an unnamed Editor of The News, Karachi, as saying that at least six persons were killed and several police personnel injured during a gun-battle with Murtaza's supporters. The report did not mention why the clash took place.

Murtaza was admitted to a Karachi hospital and was in the intensive care unit, BBC said in its 1 am bulletin.

Khairuzzaman attends mother's janaza on parole

By Staff Correspondent

Major (Retd) Khairuzzaman, one of the three detained former army officers, was granted parole for about three hours yesterday to attend the janaza and burial of his mother, according to official sources.

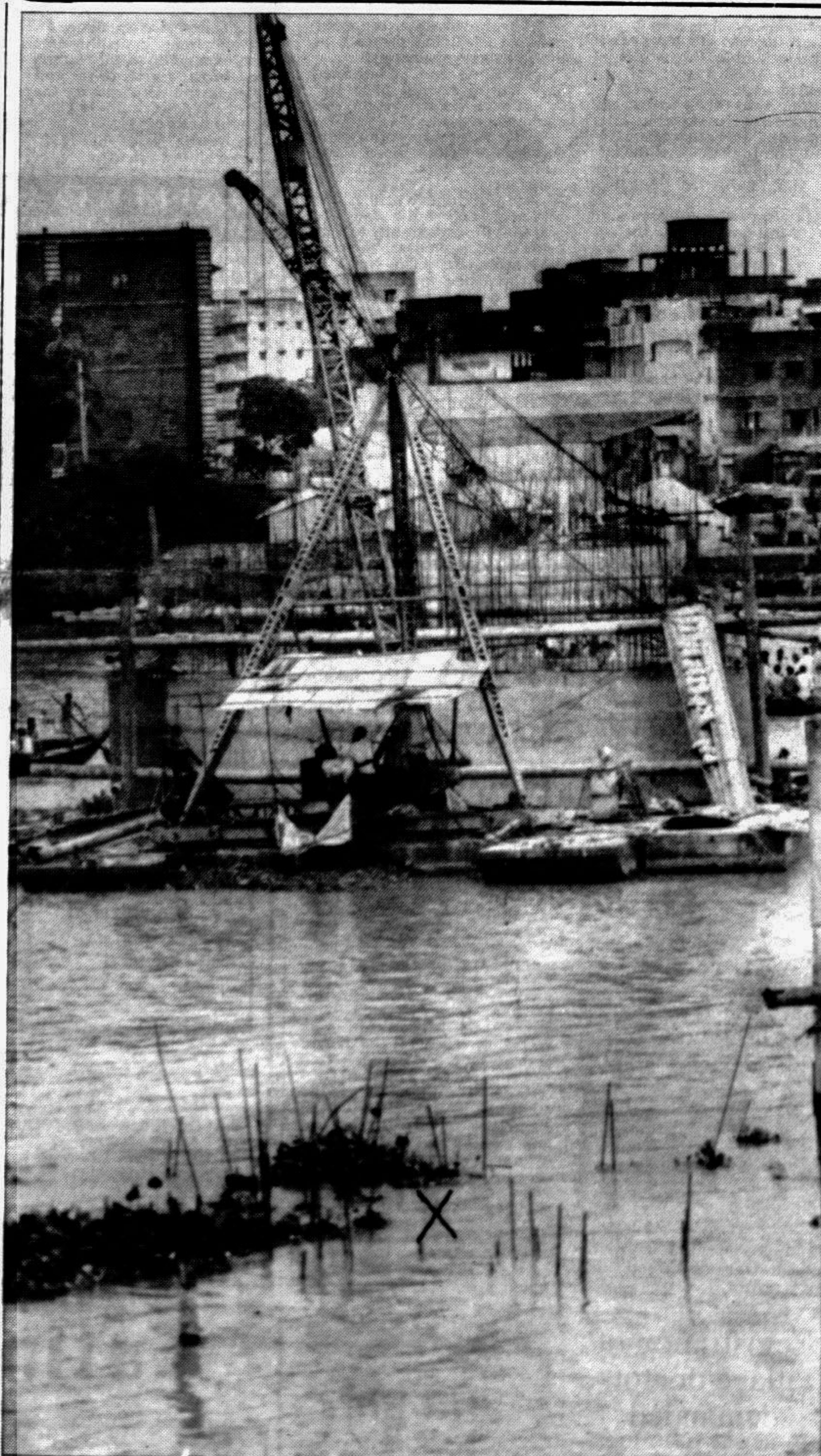
Officials said Khairuzzaman was taken out of the Dhaka Central Jail at around 4:30 pm with light security arrangements and was taken back to the jail at around 7:15 pm.

Khairuzzaman's mother, FA Shamsunnahar (77), died at the Cardiac Institute of the Suhrawardy Hospital Thursday evening. She was buried yesterday See Page 12 Col 3

Arms recovered, 16 held from Tejgaon Polytech hostel

Police in a pre-dawn raid on Latif Hall of Tejgaon Polytechnic Institute in the city yesterday arrested 16 persons and recovered one cut-rifle, two bullet and huge arms manufacturing equipment, reports UNB.

Detective Branch and Tejgaon police jointly carried out the raid at about 5 am and picked up six students and 10 outsiders, said a DMP press release.



A pillar of the under-construction Zinjira-Babubazar bridge over the Buriganga river in the city went down Wednesday. The cross mark shows the spot. — Star photo

War games near Iraqi border Over 30000 more troops, 200 jets join US forces soon

KUWAIT, Sept 20: American troops staged war games near the Iraqi border today rocking the desert with exploding artillery shells and bursts of machine-gun fire, reports AP.

Also, 400 more US troops arrived from the United States, said Navy Lt Mark Boyd.

Despite easing tensions between the United States and Iraq, a total of more than 30,000 US military personnel and 200 American planes will soon be in the Gulf.

The United States boosted its presence in the region Thursday, sending more ground troops and 75 warplanes to patrol Iraqi skies.

A total of 200 American soldiers landed Thursday at Kuwait International Airport, the vanguard of 3,500 soldiers sent by President Clinton to protect Kuwait.

The soldiers join 1,200 others who have been training for weeks in the Kuwaiti desert on 120 Abrams M1-A1 tanks and 60 Bradley fighting vehicles.

The USS Enterprise also arrived in the Gulf carrying about 75 warplanes and 8,000 personnel in its battle group, said Cmdr T McCreary, a US Navy spokesman. It joins the carrier USS Carl Vinson, which has been involved in policing the 'no-fly' zone in southern Iraq.

Before the buildup, there were only about 19,000 US military personnel in the region. Including the 1,200 in Kuwait, about 11,000 were on naval vessels and about 7,000 Air Force men and women were in Saudi Arabia. The new troops will bring the total US presence to over 30,000.

US President Bill Clinton ordered the deployment as part

of a major show of force in the Gulf to contain Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and pressure him into abandoning his air defenses in an expanded 'no fly' zone set up the United States over southern Iraq.

Meanwhile, Iraq said today that it could 'annihilate' any ground attack by US troops now massing in neighbouring Kuwait.

The editor of the government daily Al-Gumhuriya, Salah al-Mukhtar, told AFP that the 'presence of 5,000 American soldiers did not scare Iraq.'

'In case of attack, these 5,000 soldiers would be easily annihilated,' he added.

Saddam Hussein is stronger than before his latest clash with the United States and still threatens such as Jordan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. CIA See Page 12 Col 8

US co keen to develop Bhola gas field

By Sharier Khan and Inam Ahmed

A US company, Unocal, has expressed its keenness to develop Shahbazpur gas field in Bhola and to set up a power plant there, according to Petrobangla sources.

Representatives of Unocal are already in the city and has explained to the government their operational plan for developing the gas field. The plan includes setting up of a 200 MW power plant, the sources said.

Shahbazpur gas field, discovered in November last, now remains sealed as Petrobangla is still to take steps for utilisation of the gas due to lack of fund, according to a highly placed source in the Energy Ministry.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during her visit to Bhola early this month announced that Shahbazpur gas would be utilised by setting up a 200 MW power plant which would meet the power requirements in the south west region of the country.

The region is heavily dependent on imported fuel-based power generation and industrial growth there is hindered See Page 12 Col 8

Expansion of cabinet speculated

Star Report

Speculations in the ruling Awami League circle are ripe these days that Party Chief and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is going to expand her cabinet shortly.

There are also speculations about a few persons, most of them members of the Jatiya Sangsad, who are likely to be inducted into the cabinet. Some of them were even receiving 'congratulations in advance' from the party rank and file, insiders said.

Presently, some cabinet members are holding more than one ministries. Many mid-ranking leaders of the party feel that the cabinet should be expanded for the sake of proper functioning of the government, by lessening the burden of those holding more than one or two portfolios.

The speculated names include those of Engineer Mosharraf Hossain who has just won the parliamentary by-elections in Chittagong-1 Constituency. Ashikur Rahman who has been voted to Parliament in the by-elections in Rangpur-5. Nurul Islam Nahid from Sylhet-6. Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim from Gopalganj-1 and A K M Jahangir MP. Of the non-MPs, Amir Hossain Amu is being strongly speculated about.

When contacted, most of the persons concerned, however, expressed their ignorance about See Page 12 Col 7

Jatrabari bus fire case: 3 more arrested

Star Report

Three more persons, charged in the Jatrabari bus fire case were arrested on Thursday, according to a police press release here yesterday.

Police carried out a raid at the Syedabad bus terminal and arrested the charged persons — Mohammad Oziulh, Nasir and Shoukat — who were also notorious toll collectors, the press release said.

At least eight persons were roasted alive when some miscreants torched a Noakhali bound bus, Green Star on December 4, last year soon after it had left the Syedabad bus terminal at about 11:30 pm with 31 passengers on board.

Police earlier arrested three persons — Liaqat, Sentu and Abed in connection with the case. They had already confessed their involvement in the bus fire incident, said police.

Poor performance, violation of rules DSE to delist eight companies

The Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) has initiated a process to delist eight companies from the bourse for their 'poor performance and breaching of listing rules,' sources said yesterday.

The companies are: Howlader PVC Pipe Industries Ltd., Aroma Tea Ltd., Froglegs Exports Industries, Swan Textile Mills Ltd., Bangla Process Industries Ltd., Progressive Plastic Industries Ltd., Milton Tanneries Ltd and New Dhaka Refractories Ltd.

DSE chairman Imtiaz Husein told UNB that the decision to delist the companies was taken to protect the future investors as these public companies were lacking in sound environment for investment.

He said the companies were not reporting to the DSE and did not pay listing fee for last two/three years. They were also served with notices earlier regarding their performance, but nobody responded, he added.

'We have taken the decision for the better interest of the investors. We want that no new investors are exploited and lose their confidence on the capital market,' said the DSE chairman.

NRBs want 'industrial park' for investment

Non-Resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) living around the world are keen to invest in various sectors of the country, reports UNB.

Leaders of Non-Resident Bangladeshis Investors Forum Ltd held a press conference in Dhaka yesterday that they wanted opportunities to invest their capital in their homeland.

'Non-resident Bangladeshis can play an effective role in the country's efforts to attain economic development,' said Reza Karim, convenor of the newly-launched forum.

He said the NRBs need to have free flow of information about the investment climate and opportunities of the country to invest their money.

'A national consensus is required to accelerate free market economy in Bangladesh which will encourage long-term foreign direct investment here,' he added.

He said the Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) are pouring billions of dollars in the Indian economy. They also bring in the 'brain power' which helps transfer of western technology to local industries.

Like the NRIs, the NRBs can also contribute immensely to technology transfer and im-

provement of management skills by preventing 'brain drain' and encouraging 'reverse brain drain,' Karim said.

He said Bangladesh is an investors' paradise,' he added. Hailing the present government's plan to set up private EPZ, the NRBs urged the government to set up a separate 'Industrial Park' for them in the country.

They observed that the local nationalised and private commercial banks have to be more pro-active in encouraging and supporting the NRBs' investment.

The NRB Investors Forum suggested that the immigration, customs and baggage handling system at Zia International Airport be made simplified.

Replying to a question, NRB Investors Forum director Niaz Rahim said the NRBs are now investing in Latin American countries like Argentina and Bolivia due to lack of information about the investment climate of their own country.

NRBs think that there is a bright prospect to invest in software development industries and capital market sectors, said S M Quader, another director of Investors Forum.

Nepali parliament ratifies river treaty with India

KATHMANDU, Sept 20: Nepal's joint houses of Parliament this evening ratified a controversial Indo-Nepal river treaty, a parliamentary source announced, reports AFP.

The exact number of votes which went in favour of the treaty is yet to be announced, the source added.

Nepal's constitution says a bilateral treaty regarding its natural resources has to be ratified by a two-thirds majority of both houses of parliament.

Earlier the main opposition Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist Leninist (NCP-UML) withdrew its opposition to the ratification as demonstrators clashed with police outside parliament.

The change in the NCP-UML's stance allowed the treaty to reach the needed majority.

More than 8,000 extreme leftist and extreme rightists demonstrated outside the parliament building chanting anti-Nepal and anti-Indian slogans and trying to prevent MPs from voting on the treaty, witnesses

said. Police fired teargas to disperse the crowd and several extreme-left leaders were arrested, they added.

Even staunch supporters and activists of the NCP-UML warned their party MPs of unspecified dire consequences if they dared to ratify the bilateral accord.

The demonstration was organised by the extreme left National Democratic Front-Nepal (NDF-N), Nepal Workers' and Peasants' Party (NWPP).

The tripartite coalition government had tabled the treaty for ratification by a two-thirds majority of both houses of Nepal's parliament last month but the NCP-UML called for revisions to the treaty before it would give its support.

The NCP-UML decided to change its stance after the Nepalese government received a letter on the treaty from the Indian government which said New Delhi was prepared to hold talks on the Mahakali package and other relevant issues.